

Ayn Rand is coming back into fashion, and Rep. John Campbell is a fan:

Signs of the Rand revival abound. The surprisingly large anti-government Tea Party protests have been chock-a-block with signs such as “Atlas Is Shrugging” and “The name is Galt. John Galt.” Sales of Rand’s classic *Atlas Shrugged* have soared in 2009, above a level that was already extremely impressive for a 1,000-page, critically unloved, 52-year-old novel. Two major publishing houses brought out new biographies of Rand almost simultaneously this fall. And after decades of Hollywood development limbo, *Atlas Shrugged* may finally be hitting the screen soon in the form of a cable mini-series starring Charlize Theron... Rep. John Campbell (R-Calif.), gives out copies of *Atlas Shrugged* to departing interns.

Recall this interview from earlier this year: “People are starting to feel like we’re living through the scenario that happened in ‘*Atlas Shrugged*, The achievers, the people who create all the things that benefit rest of us, are going on strike. I’m seeing, at a small level, a kind of protest from the people who create jobs, the people who create wealth, who are pulling back from their ambitions because they see how they’ll be punished for them.”

Like most philosophy-obsessed college students, I had my flirtation with Ayn Rand. I read *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Fountainhead*, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, even *The Romantic Manifesto* (which, along with *Fountainhead*, has shaped my ideas about Art considerably). Rand really was a fantastic, underrated writer. Her political ideas are also crazy.

Rep. John Campbell is not the only Republican who has rediscovered their love of Ayn Rand since Barack Obama was elected President. Much of their rhetoric in the passed year has sounded quite a bit like *Atlas Shrugged*. We’ve heard Republicans call the New Deal socialist and health care reform an evil infringement upon freedom. More and more we’re hearing echoes of Ayn Rand.

Ayn Ryan believed that all taxation (not just progressive) was an effort by the poor to enslave the rich. Her famous protagonist John Galt was essentially a resistance fighter for the wealthy, who had to go into hiding to prevent the evil socialist state from persecuting him. She believed that altruism (not just government wealth redistribution, but all private charity) and religion were evil.

If the Republican Party, and Representatives like Campbell, are indeed celebrating the return of Ayn Rand, they are in fact celebrating a return to pre-New Deal, pre-Teddy Roosevelt, pre-anti-trust, pre-progressive era politics. I'd love to see Campbell asked about what he actually supports from Atlas Shrugged.

By his quote, it actually seems like Campbell believes that we are living out the plot of Atlas Shrugged, in an age where the top federal tax bracket has never been lower, and inequality in wealth has never been higher. Where this delusion came from, I don't know.